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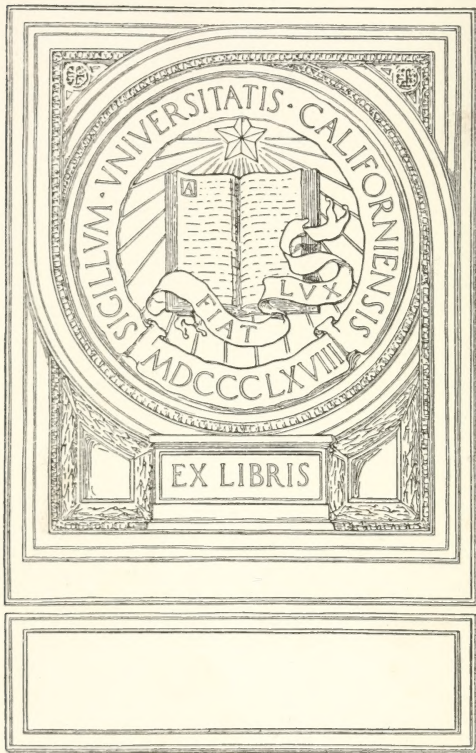


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The Background  
of  
Mystery

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Professor G. R. Noyes







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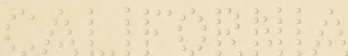
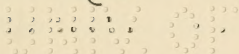


# THE BACKGROUND OF MYSTERY

AND OTHER VERSES

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR



NEW-YORK

PRINTED AT THE DE VINNE PRESS

1891

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“The Background of Mystery” and “In the Gods’ Shadow” have lain in my desk for the past three years. Some time I had expected leisure and inclination to revise them, — but upon re-perusal lately they seemed lacking in unity of construction or possibly are essentially unpoetical; at least I felt that I could not work out the idea I had in my own mind. It is probably folly to print what is unsatisfactory even to one’s self, but I could not consign them to oblivion without some little epitaph to mark their grave. The text for that epitaph will be culled from the critics.

*January 25, 1891.*



## PROLOGUE.

*Suppose that at the Judgment Day  
Some man arose in burning hell,  
Who in his agony could say,  
O Lord, my God ! is this thing well ?*

*Behold, from all eternity,  
Before he formed the human race,  
God knew me and predestined me  
To suffer in this wretched place.*

*Not for my sins or any ill  
That I had done to earn his hate,  
But for the purpose of his will  
He doomed me to this awful fate.*

*And when his Son came down to die,  
As chosen in eternity,  
He brought me no redemption nigh,  
His blood was shed but not for me.*

*The years flew on, and in due time  
The harvest ripened. I was born,  
And lived unstained of any crime  
Or evil save as all men mourn*

*Some trivial sins. Before the eyes  
Of men I lived a model life ;  
I made my home a paradise  
Of happiness for child and wife.*

*I believed in God — I put my trust  
That he no mocking title bore ;  
Who called himself the “ Good ” and “ Just,”  
And “ Merciful,” forevermore.*

*I held when God came to our reach,  
He meant but what we mean alone,  
He juggled not with human speech,  
Nor gave for bread a lifeless stone.*

*I did not, dared not, attribute  
To him such arbitrary ways,  
As would the blood-stained Moloch suit,  
As even the heathen dared not phrase.*

*I believed God's mighty power was good,  
From which no creature's soul could fall ;  
I believed in God's true fatherhood,  
In Christ who gave his life for all.*

*I dared not think a favored few  
Alone received his love and care,  
While millions were but born to rue  
His hatred and their own despair.*

*But rather that alike to all  
His heart and ear were ever ope,  
That through dark clouds the sun-rays fall  
Of an eternal, living hope.*

*Would any one to him rehearse,  
When thus in visible agony  
He stood before the universe,  
And pleaded for humanity —*

*That vast humanity that died  
Without an altar, priest, or word  
From God — that smote clasped hands and  
cried,  
But no response from heaven heard ;*

*Or those who hedged by circumstance,  
By alien birth or impotent will,  
Could not attain Faith's saving glance,  
But lived and died uncertain still —*

*Would any Calvinist, I say,  
That ever trod this sin-worn globe,  
Defend his creed, nor find that day  
God's answer to the friends of Job ?*

*January 25, 1891.*







## The Background of Mystery.

### CANTO I.

#### THE CRY OF MAN.

O THOU of human gifts the source divine !  
Lord of all sculpture, poesy, and art ;  
The Unknown God behind the pagan shrine ;  
Muse whom the Grecian's inperspicuous heart  
Fabled in Castaly — what song can start  
In soul of bird or man save as thou wilt ?  
Of man what grand conception stand apart  
Undying through all ages save as built  
Of thee and thine the laud — alas, with man the  
guilt !

Wherefore what man of unclean heart and lips  
Dare sing thee or invoke the heavenly aid ?  
Not I — whose spirit walks in thy eclipse  
Without the pale in which thy saints have prayed.

Yet, God, what burning in my soul is made !  
What sleepless nights these haunting songs have  
given !

The cry of man on whom thy hand is laid,  
Or shrieks that echo up from souls unshriven  
From lurid gulfs of Hell to the white shores of  
Heaven !

Yet, God, thou only should'st be feared and  
praised —

The inconceivable Deity whose word  
Spake matter into being, and upraised  
From naught the varied universe, and conferred  
On rocks and leaves thy law — on beast and bird  
Sure instinct — thought and moral sense on man ;  
On man — sole man — who only has incurred  
Thy wrath — albeit according to thy plan,  
Which who has e'er resisted, Lord, or ever can ?

All thy creation doth acknowledge thee  
Most marvelous, wise, omnipotent, and just ;  
Self-conscious, self-contained, and it may be  
Most loving and most piteous, as we trust.  
Who can exhaust thy praise, but ever must  
In silence muse on thy perfection broad !  
The holy, happy, perfect One who dost  
Not need as needing anything our laud,  
Self-complacent, self-loving, self-sufficient God !

How wonderful is this, O Thou Most High !  
How different from the creatures of thy hand  
Who crave companionship and droop and die  
In isolation as frail vines that spanned  
An oak down-fallen, unclasped in every strand,  
Fade and decay ; and oh ! how far apart,  
Shrined in thine awful self, serene and bland,  
Untouched by tear or prayer or anguished heart,  
Immovable and calm — forever calm — thou art !

For anger does not move thee as in man  
The spirit is perturbed ; thou canst not fear,  
And sorrow casts no shadow on the span  
Of thy eternity, nor suffering sear  
The tortured mind, or pain-throbbled nerve, or  
tear  
Of misery, but unmeasured by degrees  
Thou ever retest, yet work'st ever here,  
And work'st e'er yet e'er retest in thine ease  
Like streams of tideless glass, or waveless frozen  
seas.

And Time and Space and Death are not to thee,  
And Far and Near bear no relation — thou  
Who fill'st Earth, Heaven, and Hell yet bodi-  
lessly,  
And hast no age on thy unchangeable brow.  
Thou hast no Past nor Future, only Now,  
Unapproachable Almighty who dost fill

Eternity — before whom prostrate bow  
Archangels, seraphs, saints who praise thee still —  
Thy creatures lauding thy unfathomable Will.

All things were for thine own sole pleasure  
made —  
And man — not that they add unto thy bliss  
But so it pleased thee, for, as we have said,  
The bliss cannot augmented be that is  
Infinite — self-contained — nor would'st thou  
miss  
If by thy word this Universe returned  
To the inchoate darkness and abyss  
From which it sprang at first, thou hadst not  
mourned  
For man who prayed or seraph that adoring  
burned.

Thou doest right because it is thy Will,  
And not, as some affirm, because 't is right ;  
Thou openest wide thy bounteous hand to fill  
The raven's beak, the wild beast's appetite  
Howling in Libyan deserts through the night ;  
Thou showest mercy, and Wrath tarries still  
The heedless sinner once more to respite ;  
Thou lovest (blesséd is that domicile),  
But why? for Love or Mercy's sake — nay, 't is  
thy Will.

The Will of God — the very God of God,  
 The pillar of the Universe — for lo !  
 All things that are or will be on thy nod  
 Depend -- all laws that bind the earth or glow  
 In distant suns which we call stars, or flow  
 In tides and winds, in tree and rock and dust,  
 Are but th' expression of thy will, and so  
 The acts of man are shadowed by thy Must,  
 Dread, irresistible, inscrutable, and just.

In Heaven it blossoms in the pure white flower  
 Of happiness and pleasure evermore ;  
 Thrice happy they who find their natal hour  
 Or death's tide flowing — on that peaceful shore,  
 Not through desert of theirs or good that bore  
 The fruit of this reward, but thy sole Will,  
 Turned graciously to them even as it wore  
 Hatred to Esau and the fiends that fill  
 The Pit with Satan doomed unto eternal ill.

But Earth — oh, Earth ! a great Belshazzar feast,  
 Where all sup Fate, though few behold the Hand  
 Pierced by the nail whose bleeding wound has  
     ceased,  
 Or perhaps affrighted cannot understand,  
 Drawn by unchangeable Doom to Ruin's strand !  
 And yet shall man, whose spirit naught discerns—  
 Because thus was the Universe first planned —

Shall man — the clay the potter loves or spurns  
As pleases him — condemn the flames in which he  
burns?

Is it because changed music in Heaven's ear,  
The raucous cries of souls in endless bale?  
Yet Sin's swart shadow flung athwart the sphere  
Darkens the soul of men as with a veil —  
From hence, perhaps, springs thy wrath — a  
    blasting gale,  
And thunders and dread lightnings of the Night  
Since Sin would even the throne of God assail,  
Unlaw the firmament's remotest height,  
The angels' service swerve and paths of life and  
    light !

So Adam; the tree of which the race is fruit,  
Whose roots stretch forth and fibers grasp on  
    Hell,  
What flower shall blossom from so dread a root?  
What fruit from such a flower and source so fell?  
What fate awaits the vine that bears not well  
Sour shriveled grapes or flowers that fruit no  
    more ?  
Or rose that Beauty bends to kiss and smell  
And finds worm-eaten even through the core?  
May not God, too, destroy the weeds his garden  
    bore ?

But, O Lord God, the shuddering spirit cries,  
 Blot conscious souls from life and quivering flesh?  
 Wilt thou curse briers whereon no figs arise,  
 Or salt seaweed because unfit to thresh?  
 Man born in sin and tangled in the mesh  
 Of Circumstance — environed ere his birth  
 By taint hereditary that afresh  
 Reblooms when opportunity springs forth —  
 Wilt thou consign to hell such frailty of the Earth?

Infinite agony for finite sin,  
 Eternity in flame for Earth's few days —  
 Is this the awful truth unfolded in  
 Thy Book? And even we read with more amaze  
 (Just God, thy saints for this too give thee praise)  
 That Sin and Hell are creatures of thy will;  
 Thy strength supports the sinner in his ways,  
 Determining each unborn act, yet still  
 The deed though thine with him th' obliquity of  
 th' ill!

Yea, more — what Muse dare sing it without  
 guilt?

Is it not written in Paul that Egypt fell,  
 Predestined by the scheme thy wisdom built  
 By whose election souls find Heaven or Hell?  
 Hated or loved void ages illimitable  
 Ere in the womb their bones and fashions grew?  
 If Pharaoh, why not our first parents as well,

And blood-stained Cain and treacherous Judas  
too?

Ah, Lord, was not their sin the work given them  
to do?

O God, thou knowest! I believe it true.  
Sophists of ethics, though ye rant I hold  
That every deed of man is God's act too,  
However vile — however great in mould  
The human by Divinity controlled  
No murderer's victim dead — no girl betrayed,  
No Nero in his life all crimes enrolled,  
But thou hast foreordained the career displayed,  
Dooming to penal fires whom no resistance made.

The keys of Hell — the shafts of Death are  
thine.  
The good achieved — the crass mistakes of  
Time —  
War's blood spilled on th' ensanguined Earth  
like wine,  
Famine and Pestilence foul-bred from slime,  
The world's appalling lists of sin and crime,  
Suffering and sorrow and wild phantasy;  
The rout of passion — Love, the most sublime,  
With Hate its shadow, and all things that be  
For which men shall be judged — th' efficient cause  
is thee!



The silly insects snapped the poultry's prey,  
 The fowl, and fish, and flesh of savory smell  
 That wait upon thy appetite to-day,  
 Man, petty sovereign, shall they all rebel?  
 What then! shall man cry from the pangs of Hell  
 And at his bar ask God to be arrayed  
 Who only has rights inalienable?  
 Go to — shall not the choice be his who made  
 To love or hate, bless, curse, refuse or grant thee aid?

Yet sin is that one awful thing in man  
 Hated of God, and in the universe  
 The only creature laid beneath his ban,  
 But cursed by him with no fictitious curse,  
 Nor ever can Heaven cease Sin to amerce,  
 Save the Almighty abdicates the throne;  
 For as the pagan fabulists rehearse  
 Of old gray Saturn by great Jove undone,  
 Sin would depose Heaven's king and reign supreme  
 alone!

And this is man's estate — O ye who tell  
 Of finite sin, is it not infinite?  
 Think ye sin ceases at the gates of Hell?  
 Think ye the grave can harmonize and fit  
 Th' unleavened venom of the skeptic's wit?  
 The festering sensualist — the warrior's pride —  
 The belle's small vanity — nay, but as 'tis writ,

“He that is foul, still let him foul abide.”  
Death has no alchemy that such are sanctified.

O fruitful mother of all heresies,  
The foe of science, and sworn friend of wrong,  
The deft appeal to human sympathies,  
But not to seekers after truth belong  
These which Delilah-like seduce the strong,  
Calling on shackled minds the enemy  
Of partisanship, whose dangerous forces throng  
To join their strength and influence even with thee,  
Thou patron saint of hypocrites, Utility !

Yet, Lord, my God, there were two friends of mine,  
And both are dead, unhallowed of thy church —  
One drowned upon the southern ocean's brine,  
Who knew thee not nor found thee in his search,  
The whitest soul I knew — without a smirch  
Of evil — from his boyhood consecrate  
To grand ideals and thoughts, from the high  
perch  
Of saintly, noble manhood 't was his fate  
To die not knowing thee — Lord, where is now my  
mate ?

And she — who loved me more than she loved life,  
Who loved me more than fame — oh! where is she?  
A good heart with sweet, generous pulses rife,  
Who wept to comfort others' misery,—

A gentle soul who erred in loving me,  
 And yet who dreamed thy mercy, Lord, had been  
 So vast that like some overflowing sea  
 'Twould overlook—I dare not call it sin—  
 The lightning spared her not. Hast thou, Lord,  
 drawn her in?

Can I be blest if she exists unblest?  
 Could I be happy in heaven with her in hell?  
 Lo! while she lived on earth she had no rest  
 If I were heavy-souled. She loved me well;  
 Unselfish, woman-like, unquenchable,  
 Her pride, ambition, hope, were all in me.  
 Can I forget her? Can I hope to dwell,  
 Hymning thy praise in heavenly ecstasy,  
 And see her streaming eyes glancing reproachfully?

The earth — the fairy scenes of heart and eye —  
 Is barren now since she has left me here;  
 The flowers she loved — the stars she watched to  
 spy,  
 First trembling in the twilight's azure sphere,  
 How different seem now since she is not near!  
 In the dull pain of absence — O dread Death!  
 This is the heart-sick burden of thy fear,  
 But worse even yet to dread the after-breath,  
 Or shall hearts be less true when no flesh compasseth?

Oh, can this really be? O piteous Christ!  
This awful mystery — this dreadful doom,  
Like helpless babes to Moloch sacrificed?  
Is such the after-fate that shrouds the tomb?  
The young, the fair, the tender mother's bloom,  
The prattling child, the brave, the gray-haired  
    sire,  
The honored of the ages — blast the womb  
Of love that bears the children of thy ire!  
Be merciful, O God, and disappoint the fire!

This sweet-voiced child I hold upon my knee, —  
These innocent eyes — this cheek too pure for  
    shame,  
Dearer to me than my heart's blood can be —  
God, canst thou doom her to the unceasing  
    flame, —  
Her tender limbs and lithe and cunning frame?  
Can it now be that in thy holy eyes  
She is accursed — and ere her birth by name  
Elected to thy hate, howe'er she tries  
Or seeks thee, doomed to feed the worm that never  
    dies?

What does it matter, then, what life we lead  
If thus in some unjust eternity  
The vicious action and the virtuous deed  
Find the same wage by some predoomed decree.  
Eternal death — whatever that may be —  
Of disproportionate torture — oh, I swear

The doctrine seems more horrible to me  
Than any fear-born blasphemy that e'er  
Was dreamed by naked savage housed in some wild  
beast's lair.

O Rachel, in heaven, can thy heart forget  
The children of thy travail on the earth ?  
O Mary Mother, dost thou harbor yet  
The memory of the pangs of human birth ?  
Shall motherhood be e'er such little worth  
That it will spurn back to th' abyss of hell  
The babe it suckled, and with mocking mirth  
Rejoice and praise Omnipotence as well  
That pushed it down the slippery steep o'er which  
it fell !

If such can be, Lord God, unlaw the sphere !  
Let night-dark chaos reign and call for mate  
Another deluge, but no Noah appear  
The sons of Esau to perpetuate.  
Renew no rainbow to deride our state,  
Saved from the waters in the flames to lie  
Eternally, O children of God's hate !  
To what frail refuge can ye ever fly ?  
Take counsel of Job's wife : Arise, curse God, and  
die !

Set thou a guard upon my lips, O God,  
Lest Sorrow's voice speak words of sin and blight,  
Or love of race drive me to thoughts unawed.  
Shall not the Lord of all the Earth do right ?

Shall we not praise him even though he smite ?  
Lord, our own hearts bear witness to thy claim  
Against ourselves — we walk in gloom and night  
Restless until we rest beneath thy name ;  
Only in thy tabernacle peace of heart e'er came.

But what is this misshapen thing called Sin ?  
What are her wages ? answer me, my soul !  
Hast thou not found her very bitterest in  
Her sweetest service, as against thee roll  
Regret, remorse, shame, and that utmost goal  
Of bitterness, satiety — ah me !  
What pleasure gives the harlot and the bowl  
To those who sin in heart-sick apathy,  
Indifferent where or what, so time glides rapidly !

The curse of Cain — th' insanity of Saul  
Cry for the harp that soothes with fitful calm,  
But know at last in vain its echoes fall  
Upon the ear — oft heard, it brings no balm.  
Away ! let dance and revel, arm in arm,  
Allure thee to the gay and thoughtless crowd :  
The playhouse and the ball have yet their charm.  
Join where the laughter merriest is and loud,  
And drown in Lethean wine the memories of the  
shroud !

Coward ! th' inevitable moment comes !  
The summons issues forth, thou canst not stay ;  
The palsyng hour that evermore benumbs  
The love and light and hope of mortal clay.

Canst thou bribe Death to lag upon the way?  
Ah, or in toil, devotion, play, or crime,  
Who seeks to flee or find him, God will pay  
According to his destiny — his time,  
His taste, his acts, fore-mapped by God to sink or  
climb.

To sink or climb — who knows which fate shall  
win  
In the tragi-comedy of human life?  
And thou — whoe'er thou art — rejoicing in  
Health, wealth, caste, fame, the love of child or  
wife,  
Youth, and the hope and rapture of the strife,—  
Say, dost thou ken what shaft may smite thee  
low?  
With what of shame thy future may be rife,  
Thy youth all blessing but age curse the moe,  
White hairs and palsied limbs disgraced and bowed  
with woe?

Lady, whose beauty dazzles heaven's sun,  
Pure as the shafts of light, or breath of flowers,  
Stepping, like some regardless queen upon  
Rich rugs, o'er human hearts in thy soft bowers —  
Canst thou imagine how these midnight hours  
The outcast walks, rejoicing in her shame?  
Yet she was once as thee — and even such dowers  
Await full many now of spotless fame.  
O woman, who can say thine will not be the same?

For what avails even birth from royal loins,  
Or priestly sires or wealth or cultured taste,  
If Circumstance, which is God's Regent, joins  
The foes which need or inclination haste  
By love, hate, wealth, or fell ambition disgraced ?  
What reft imperial Hapsburg of an heir ?  
What turns the holy fields of Zion waste ?  
Madness ! which all in their proportion share,  
Thou reader, and who weaves these verses of de-  
spair.

Thou call'st it madness — madness, yea, of sin !  
The universal heritage of man,  
All brought this world and all that follows in  
The world to come — the all-embracing ban  
Whose curse in every crime and woe I scan.  
Feel'st thou it not delirious in thy blood  
When uncontrollable passions lead the van ?  
As wrecking waves tumultuously enfold  
The beach where lately summer ripples lapped and  
flowed.

Oh what is man, and art thou mindful of him ?  
The son of man, and dost thou visit him ?  
Or scorned of earth below and heaven above him,  
Orphan and outcast, who his sails must trim



On Life's mysterious ocean ways and dim  
 Sans rudder, pilot, without compass, chart,  
 Or aught that may the proper pathway limn —  
 O man, a dread phenomenon thou art!  
 Who knows thy course of life? its finish or its start?

I call thy soul to solitude. Forsake  
 The sprightly converse and convivial scene  
 Awhile, and to some cloistered walk betake  
 Thy lonely way, or to the shadowy green  
 Of some vast wood where naught can intervene  
 Save Nature's own suggestions, and there spend  
 A pensive hour and map thy course between  
 Thy birth and death, and how thine actions tend  
 To be in harmony with the dread journey's end.

What man dare thus withdraw his soul apart  
 From its activities and there survey  
 The character insphered within his heart,  
 Nor turn with shuddering sigh his glance away?  
 I marvel not that saints became the prey  
 Of demons in the ancient solitudes  
 Of penance, but the demons were of clay,  
 For always when alone to man intrudes  
 Forlornly multiplied the Self that in him broods!

And this they saw, and so wilt thou, O man,—  
A glance of Hell — while round thee Nature's  
calm

Will add a second curse as if her ban  
Were too upon the wretch whose voice and harm  
Were th' only blasphemy where else were psalm,  
Sole break in continuity of good.

The very stars have an aggressive arm  
And war 'gainst sinful souls, and the tongued wood  
Loud whispers imprecations against their evil mood !

If grosser earth thus disallows her kin,  
How shall he find in Heaven's diviner sphere  
Companionship — the sinless mate with sin ?  
What pleasure to an unregenerate ear  
To sit among God's holy ones and hear  
The seraphs praise him and th' adoring Host,  
Apostles, martyrs, and elect draw near  
Proffering homage — every thought engrossed  
In endless laud of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ?



## The Background of Mystery.

### CANTO II.

#### THE EULOGY OF CHRIST.

SHINE, sacred Star, whose rays outshine the sun !  
Not Bethlehem's plains have caught that light  
alone,

But far as yonder orb of day hath run  
The circuit of the earth's extremest zone  
O'er isles unnamed and continents unknown  
And mighty empires that will scepter sway  
Further than hath the Roman eagle flown  
In flight of conquest, all will crave thy ray  
To rise and conquer in the light of the New Day.

Thy dawn brings a new era to the earth,  
A new creation greater than the old  
When the Creative Word in law spake forth  
And the evolving Chaos did unfold

Order, and light, and life, but now behold  
A greater marvel than the host of them !  
For He at whose almighty word they rolled  
Into existence tears the diadem  
From his own brow and lies the Babe of Bethlehem.

How sweetly evening fell on Judah's hills !  
The sun behind them slowly sank from sight,  
The sheep had slaked their thirst from many rills  
And slept — the shepherds watched their flocks by  
    night,  
When suddenly around them flashed a light —  
A heavenly light that made the stars seem dim,  
And in the glory was an angel bright,  
Who told the Christ Child's birth, and seraphim,  
Cherub, and angel host sang the first Christmas  
    hymn.

The savage sword of bloody War was sheathed,  
And the first time in many weary years  
O'er the precarious throne of Cæsar breathed  
The benison of rest from strife and fears.  
The youthful bride was wed no more with tears,  
The trembling children bade their sorrows cease,  
For Janus' gates were closed — like summer  
    meres  
The states of Rome slept in the glad release,  
And all the world reposed in universal peace.

Yet outward peace but mocked the inward war  
Whose battle-field was in the human breast,  
Alike in him who rode as conqueror  
As with the slave who feared his lord's behest.  
They all sought vainly that one blessing — rest  
Of conscience and of mind, and finding none  
Some dared to die the worst perhaps to test,  
And others, haply braver, dared live on,  
But aimless and *blasé* — the charm of life was gone.

Even the Philosophers but guessed at truth,  
Few reverently and many scoffingly  
Babbling of God and virtue, while forsooth  
They cared, I ween, for neither. Such used to be  
The masters of the old philosophy,  
The mighty men of Rome — the wise of Greece.  
Some preached the gospel of Uncertainty  
And laughed at all — some thought the world  
    would cease  
At death, and men turned atheists for want of  
    peace.

This was the hair-held sword of Damocles  
That stole the zest from all the feasts of old,  
This seemed to wail a dirge upon the breeze  
And peopled solitude with demons bold ;

It tarnished all the miser's hoarded gold  
And sere'd the laurel on the victor's brow,  
And turned the Forum's glowing praises cold,  
And 'midst the pomp of the triumphal show  
The conqueror's mortality it whispered low.

From the tense thought of our consummate age  
Let us glance backward to that distant Past.  
Four hundred years God spake not. On the  
stage  
Of Earth's activity there were enmassed  
Statesmen and seers, and warriors who are  
classed  
Greatest of men, yet all despairing, failed  
To formulate a scheme of truth, but cast  
Upon Death's shore died stoics or assailed  
The gods they made or dreamed, even as old Hor-  
ace wailed.

Great God ! with what disgusting attributes  
Heroes and men of glorious minds conceived  
And robed the Deity, from Egypt's brutes,  
Worshipped as God, to those that Rome believed  
In air and sea and wood — alike received  
By white-haired priest, cloaked sage, and igno-  
rant clown —  
Adulterous deities and gods that thieved.  
To altars foul with lust sweet girls bowed down,  
And matrons venerable, whose age was as a crown !

O Sages ! sapient names among mankind,  
High priests of Nature,—ye who proudly say  
That reason is not hopelessly purblind  
In things divine but liberal nature's ray,  
Confess enough — at least in this our day —  
Why spoke the ancients with such different tone ?  
Why cried the moral wisdom of their day —  
The wisest perhaps whom nature taught alone —  
That cry, “ That all we know is, nothing can be  
known ! ”

And ye — what doctrines do ye now agree ?  
Plain nature does this “ Age of Reason ” teach ?  
Gods — God — no God ? Does Immortality  
Repair at Life's dark end Death's awful breach,  
Or does the conscious soul no future reach ?  
Who for this life even can the ways define  
Of Right and Wrong ? Oh babbling words of  
speech !

The Sybarite will his creed construe with thine,  
Ascetic — or wilt thou to his stained path incline ?

Blind leaders whom the credulous world receives  
Deluding and deluded — easy fools,  
Capacious in your faith, though it believes  
More miracles than in mediæval schools

Engrossed in book of horn by monkish tools;  
From Hume to Strauss—from Rousseau to  
Voltaire,  
Darwin to Tyndall—or where roguery rules  
The brood of Slade or Ingersoll's loud blare—  
Where do you coincide? What unity do you bear?

Nor yet even then — nor now t' anticipate,  
Nor yet even then — so e'er is Error rife,  
Were the Diviner Script inviolate.  
The race-proud Hebrew with the words of Life  
Blurred God's white truth with ritualistic strife,  
Careful of ceremonies, postures, dress,  
And scourings of a pot, a pan, a knife,  
Feeding on husks — the inward truth and grace  
He missed that these symbolic acts were meant  
t' express.

Arise, O Star of Hope, arise, unfold  
Thy perfect light—the New Day Sun seven-  
rayed!  
He comes whom Hebrew prophecy foretold  
And ancient type and ritual displayed,  
The World's Desire for whom the nations prayed,  
The answer to the prayer of Socrates,  
The Christ whom Roman Virgil's verse portrayed,  
Unconscious that his songs were prophecies—  
Thy true Messiah comes, Zion fulfilling these!



The Magi saw His portent in the skies  
 And hastened with their gifts. The path they  
     trod  
 Hath marked the way by which the Dawn should  
     rise  
 And lead the nations on to Truth and God,  
 And fling the rays of Liberty abroad,  
 The westward march of Civilization and Art.  
 Even savage tribes have at His name been awed,  
 And a new softness trembled in their heart  
 And changed the wish to slay and bade the soft tear  
     start.

As when the fierce barbarians sacked old Rome  
 In the wild whirlwind of the world's just feud,  
 The foretaste of th' Apocalyptic doom,  
 The awful harvest of the martyr's blood,  
 The curses of the gladiators who stood  
 And vainly sued for respite — without a tear  
 The cruel Goth with fatal indifference viewed;  
 The slave and noble in one common bier,  
 The torch upon her treasures — all that Rome  
     held dear —

The mansions her effeminate nobles loved,  
 The costly robes in which their vanity dressed,  
 The sculptures and the pictures which had moved  
 The world to homage — in his rude, dull breast

Awoke no admiration ; on he pressed,  
His vandal course with blood and pillage rife,  
Until his soul the name of Christ confessed.  
Down dropped his upraised spear and ceased the  
    strife,  
And for that sacred Name he spared the suppliant's  
    life !

A marvel this as wonderful forsooth  
As any told in the Evangelist,  
That selfish, envious men withouten ruth  
Should be so changed -- but how no convert  
    wist --  
By godlike love their souls could not resist,  
That burned into their spirits like a fire,  
Cleansing vile nature's dross ! whoe'er held tryst  
With Christ but felt his mounting soul aspire  
With a diviner craving than Earth could e'er desire.

Yet to what pilgrimage does Faith invite ?  
Not to sweet pleasures of the flesh, but gall.  
O'er goals in which men naturally delight,  
Wealth, dalliance, power, and fame, it casts a  
    pall  
And throws aside for e'er beyond recall.  
Against all worldly pride it witnesseth,  
Yet learned, proud, rich, poor, high and low of all  
Peoples and times for this unearthlike faith  
Have lived despising life, and died despising death.

Not thus the Jew's conception of his God —  
 That shrewd monopolist whose unctuous eye  
 Grasps all advantage treasures rare afford,  
 And pastures rich, deep wells, fat herds supply.  
 Not such the swart Mohammed did espy  
 In his salacious dreams — ah, ever rife  
 With sounds and hopes of Earth, Mortality,  
 Ne'er fashioned such a soul forth from its strife.  
 To whom, Lord, shall we go — thou hast eternal life ?

And yet did e'er possessions vast of gold  
 To miser or to sensualist impart  
 Calm peace and hope, and courage nobly bold ?  
 Did power e'er satisfy the sinking heart,  
 Or learning, fame, or the drugged sweets of art,  
 Or conscious beauty smiling at her glass ?  
 Ah, ever Envy like a poison dart,  
 Or fear or Ennui — deadliest upas —  
 Or yet unsatisfied Desire does still harass !

Alas, what slaves we are of sight and taste !  
 We tread the self-same paths our fathers trod ;  
 Ardent in youth with envious footsteps haste,  
 Although worn graybeard Age has felt the rod  
 And speaks the terrors of offended God,  
 Or dies despairing else or satiate.  
 But vain th' example ; each himself must plod  
 The Wise King's path, and happy is his fate  
 If not for happiness experience comes too late.

All which we know and see and feel, and yet  
It is a barren knowledge. Human pride  
Even on the awful bier of death would set  
The trappings of vain-glory as to hide  
The hideous fact, or in despite decide,  
As some have lived on poisons to make fair  
With bloom, carved stone and eulogy allied,  
The outward guise of what must in it bear  
Foulness unthinkable — Pride's pitiful despair.

Therefore I say, since this is human nature,  
Proud, selfish, sensual, vain, in anger fell,  
It is a marvel when this perverse creature  
Whose tastes against his reason e'er rebel  
Is changed but little short of miracle.  
To cure the halt, the dumb, the deaf, the blind,  
To raise the dead seems less incredible  
Than that a man should love and serve mankind,  
Despoiling self with all for One ne'er seen resigned.

Not thus indeed all who have named His Name,  
Ye priestly hierarchs and spiritual lords  
Who despotize God's heritage and claim  
Tithes of all wealth and gifts the world affords.  
Minions of Fashion, surpliced semi-gods,  
Dwelling in palaces while round ye groan  
Christ's poor, unhoused, unfed, unclothed — the  
bawds,  
Shall they not have a greater lenience shown,  
O Pharisees, than ye, when trembling at his throne?

What signify huge edifices built  
 By plunder of the widowed orphan poor !  
 Fine carven altars foul with Usury's guilt,  
 Stained windows and gay music to allure  
 Rich worship to the beneficed sinecure ?  
 O travesty on Religion ! was 't for these  
 The Son became incarnate ? to insure  
 Luxurious pastors caste and scholarly ease ?  
 Think ye such lives and churches doth th' Almighty  
 please ?

Nor chiefly thou, blaspheming Scourge of Rome  
 Who sitteth throned in incense as a God !  
 The murderous world that filled the martyr's  
 tomb.  
 Hath knelt to thee and trembled at thy nod.  
 Dark ages that spurned Christ first gave the rod  
 Of sovereignty to thee, and at thy dread ban  
 The saints of God have perished, and their blood  
 Is on thee — vain, old, tottering, doting man,  
 Who dream'st impossible dreams, for nevermore  
 there can

Be power in thy weak, justly palsied hand,  
 Nor in thy maledictions strength nor fear,  
 Such as when once before thy gate did stand  
 A discrowned king upon whose slavish ear

The laugh of wassail jarred while thou didst cheer  
The hours with wine and harlots as he stood  
A mark for all the winter blasts to jeer,  
Although even yet, alas ! a multitude  
Who dare God tremble at thy name — unmanly  
brood !

What coronation hymn with flags unfurled  
Did Zion sing to greet her heavenly King ?  
And Rome, the mighty mistress of the world,  
Whose streets yet with th' Augustan triumph  
ring,—  
Does not her emperor to Messiah bring  
The crown and prostrate lay it at his feet,  
Beseeching Christ t' accept so mean a thing ;  
And from Earth's farthest bounds in haste to greet,  
Do not the far-off kings with lavish gifts compete ?

O Jesus ! Master of the winds and waves  
And human hearts ! Thy glories heaven fill ;  
The powers of Nature are thy suppliant slaves ;  
The foaming sea obeyed thy mighty will ;  
Thou spakest to the tempest, it was still ;  
Thy word the leper's sickness drove away ;  
The blind, the dumb, the halt, flocked round thee  
till  
Their sorrows yielded to thy healing sway,  
And Death at thy command delivered up his prey.

He ran through all Life's stages up to man,  
 And added grace and dignity to all;  
 A stainless soul whom Nature could not ban,  
 He conquered her, retrieving Adam's fall.  
 He did no act unworthy of his call,  
 Interpreting the thoughts of God to men,  
 And wresting his dominion from the thrall  
 Of Evil and beyond all human ken  
 Suffering that awful death none e'er can die again.

With whom will you compare the Christ? The  
 light  
 Of twenty analytic centuries  
 Has shed upon his life in love of spite,  
 Nor shown a flaw. While even Socrates,  
 Confucius, Boodh, Mohammed—more than  
 these,  
 All who before or since have given men creeds,  
 Are all found peccable — unbending knees,  
 Christ's enemies, have glorified his deeds  
 And cried, Centurion-like, "This man from God  
 proceeds."

The grandest souls are circumscribed by race  
 And dwarfed to local heroes ; seer and sage  
 And patriots whom the world delights to praise  
 Are cramped by limitations of their age,—

But Christ is universal, and the page  
In which he shines the legacy of all time,  
The world his country on whose boundless stage  
He moves th' exemplar of each age and clime,  
Star of the Occident — the Orient Sun sublime !

And yet the Root sprung from the barren ground,  
The undesirable because of old  
All kings were graced with purple robes and  
crowned  
With diadem and scepter, gems and gold,  
And in triumphal pageant proudly rolled  
Their chariot wheels with blood of conquest dyed.  
Such prove the royal rights that men behold,  
Confess and worship — such is human pride ;  
The poor, the meek, the unobtrusive, are denied.

The world — poor, moribund world for need of  
Christ,  
The world he made discerned him not, and  
worse,  
The people set apart to keep his tryst  
By symbol, ritual, and prophetic verse  
And emblematical histories that rehearse  
His spiritual truth — his own received him not,  
But in unreasoning hate invoked his curse  
Upon them and their children as their lot ;  
From that day unto this pursues the doom they  
sought !



O wanderers of the world ! Outcasts of Heaven !  
 Orestes of mankind ! a fearful doom  
 Is this to thy once favored people given —  
 Driven to perpetual exile till the tomb  
 Is fairer than the banquet hall — the bloom  
 Of Nature and the cheerful glance of Day !  
 Abhorred of God and man — has Earth no room  
 Amidst her wastes where thou mayst hide away  
 Till the long day of wrath hath spent its blasting ray ?

What means the heat of this great anger — say ?  
 What other nations hath the Lord used so —  
 Preserving yet afflicting ? Even to-day  
 Thy brother Ishmael sees the palm trees grow  
 Where he pitched tents three thousand years ago,  
 In presence of his brethren and his kin,  
 While Israel fled in terror to and fro  
 O'er the broad earth like Cain — in shame and in  
 His sufferings found no expiation for his sin.

But oh, that sin — that settled evermore  
 The status of man's heart ! Be mute, O Earth,  
 With voiceless terror, and thou, Heaven, pour  
 Cimmerian darkness in black horror forth.  
 Be shrouded, Sun, that gave the morning birth,—  
 How shalt thou shine, while men thy Maker slay ?  
 The Ocean seethe and comets burst the girth  
 Of Nature — even the Grave disgorge its prey,  
 Aghast at the dread burden those wooden arms display !

O shuddering History, canst thou tell again  
That Socrates the poisoned hemlock drank?  
Or measure when the just Athenian  
Was ostracized how low his country sank?  
The glittering rolls of Fame became a blank.  
On all the glory men of old time prized  
Was "Ichabod" inscribed at crime so rank  
(As if the old world's sins had not sufficed),—  
The scourge, the nails, the spear, the thorns, the  
cross of Christ!

Words fail — the climax this of human guilt:  
Adam's transgression, Sodom's vice hell bred,  
The race engulfed, and Babel's high tower built  
In Heaven's despite are from comparison fled.  
Seal up the testimony! Shroud the dead!  
But doth th' Almighty spare his blasting breath?  
O thou who marvest at man's natural bread,  
To see Life draw its nourishment from Death,  
Behold the substance here the emblem witnesseth!

For so had God decreed, and to this end  
The whole creation cursed by Adam's fall  
Felt pangs of birth her inmost being rend,  
Else had the bolt of Heaven smitten all,

Roman and Jew — but not the less appal  
Thy magnitude of sin — thy evil heart,  
O Man that knew not the predestined call,  
But in blind lust of evil played thy part  
And to all creatures proved how rightly cursed thou  
art !

Earth's wisdom, power, religion all combined  
To slay the Son of God, and even so  
To-day the self-same factors do we find  
Leagued in an impotent attempt t' o'erthrow  
The Church 'gainst which is no effectual blow !  
Fools ! — as they curse and aim their shafts and  
mock,  
Year after year their vital wound they show,  
And so confess thy power, — Eternal Rock,  
On which the saints have stood and braved the cen-  
turies' shock.

Earth has no power that parallels thy death ;  
No conqueror by his life e'er built a sway  
Comparable to that thy dying breath  
Founded. An army would arise to-day  
To which earth's greatest battle was a fray  
Of insignificant numbers, if but so  
Thy warfare was accomplished, and Malay,  
Caucasian, Indian, Negro — all would glow  
With ardor in the cause and bless a fatal blow.

Where are the victors whom the world has feared?  
The founders and destroyers of her powers,  
Who made the sea their battle-field and sere'd  
A populous plain to wastes which Heaven's showers  
Could not revive nor Art rebuild its towers,  
From Cyrus to Napoleon? They are clay,  
Less mighty than this clod of soil that flowers  
When Spring breathes o'er it and her soft winds say,  
"Arise!" to buried seeds that hear her and obey.

O Death, the loathsome, terrible and cursed,  
There is no wreck like thine! I will not rear  
Lament for those whose lives are of the worst  
(Although we all walk shadowed by thy fear);  
But, O insatiate Fiend; what have we here?—  
The cunning brain, the souls of mighty frame,  
The kings of men—one undistinguished bier,  
The foe of Beauty, Eloquence and Fame,  
The dread of Love, with emperor and serf the same!

The dread of Love, which were almighty else —  
Celestial One that shapes within the heart  
A fairy place for glorious moods and melts  
The most ferocious by his godlike art.  
And yet even Love with poison tips his darts.  
O Thou who lovest most, is it not so?  
Is not life vacancy when far apart,  
And does not Doubt prove Satisfaction's foe,  
Forever wilt thou love or thou please evermoe?

And yet by Love and Death Christ's throne is  
fixed,  
Immortal Love and Death that leads to Life !  
Intensest of all passions since unmixed  
With aught terrestrial. Earthly Love is rife  
With charms the eye can seize, and in the strife  
Of Mutability mere beauties fade,  
And oft the love of mistress or of wife .  
Nourished on false ideals dies betrayed  
With bitterer memories too from wounds for years  
self-made.

But thou, transforming and eternal Lover,  
The Substance of all Good — Source of all Light —  
Thou art the changeless God ! No space can cover  
Thy presence whose sweet glory shines more  
bright,  
To Faith where purblind Nature deems it night,  
Almighty Power and infinite in charms,  
Lord, Saviour, Friend — no circumstance can  
blight,  
No rage of men or demons cause alarms  
To those whose weakness trusts "the Everlasting  
Arms."

Time proves it true — deny it as thou wilt —  
All, all else fails to satisfy the soul  
There are true pleasures, too, by which are built  
Substantial joys, but yet they lose control

Of fickle fancy as the seasons roll.  
The dreams of Youth have fled, Ambition's toys  
Attract not when the life draws near its goal ;  
Friends die, books fail to please, and Nature cloys—  
But Christ and Christ alone the parting soul enjoys.

For this cause Christ assumed a mortal breath,  
For this endured the suffering and the shame,  
That so he might be Lord of Love and Death  
And Prince of Life with energy to reclaim  
The vile in sin. From prison, rack and flame,  
From happy homes, from couches of disease,  
From learned, from rude, from rich, from poor  
the same  
From our day, from th' initial centuries,  
His witnesses—a myriad host—take voice from  
these !

O happy people whom the Lord doth love !  
O glorious Bride whom Christ hath made his  
choice !  
Thou shalt be safe when Earth's foundations move  
And Heaven rolls at the Archangel's voice  
Together like a scroll.—"Rejoice ! rejoice !  
For thou shalt then be with him evermore  
At whose right hand there are eternal joys,  
And cleansed from sin forever shalt adore  
The Saviour who for thee sin's utmost penalty bore.

Herein was Calvary's agony alone,  
Christ's pure soul cursed an offering for sin,  
And here ceased ethical questions though unknown

How in white innocence was the origin  
Of Evil — nor why thus it should have been,  
Nor why such world-wide suffering is abroad.  
But by the helpless travail Christ was in —  
The Well-beloved of God — my soul is awed,  
And the dark shadow rolls from the cleared face of  
God.

There are no creeds containing all the truth.  
Men with their finite logic can deny  
That God can suffer, but that scene forsooth  
He did not look on with a pitiless eye ;  
His heart must too have felt the agony  
As into Mary's soul the sword was thrust,  
And since God suffered, though I know not why,  
Whate'er befalls a creature of the dust  
Is shallow to the depth of that Almighty must !

The cross of Christ has proved God's love for  
man ;  
His way is perfect — true, man cannot see  
Through the deep mysteries of the wondrous  
plan,  
But there is light enough to show to thee

Men justly held responsible to be  
With moral limit to Almighty Power  
And limit to omnipotent charity,  
And some way to be known in the dread hour  
Of judgment all the guilt will prove man's righteous  
dower !

Conceive the condescension of the Son  
Co-equal and eternal with the Sire,  
Who emptied out his glory and took on  
A mortal form, even though it did require  
In him renunciation so entire  
That evermore he must be God and Man,  
And as a Man bear flesh's penalties dire  
And when no longer under death's dread ban  
Be Man in Heaven still, through Heaven's eternal  
span.

Yet only so could God be known of men,  
Or seen in Heaven of created eyes ;  
For sinless seraphs veil their faces when  
Adoring — how much more vile man likewise !  
Who sees the naked Godhead straightway dies  
Annihilated — but in Jesu's face  
God's glory shines resplendently. There lies  
The fullness of the Deity — all grace ;  
In him Heaven's Tabernacle — God's abiding-place !



In Christ th' unfallen angels are preserved,  
And Earth's fixed pillars through his passions  
stand ;  
Even Hell is spared awhile, although reserved  
For final judgment at th' Almighty's hand ;  
And doubtlessly yon curved blue skies expand,  
Made holy by the sacrifice, and meet  
For God's invisible presence and command,  
Since even the stars that sparkle at his feet  
Are not pure in his sight, but marred and incom-  
plete.

Then learn — although as the Creator's act  
Sin bears a different aspect and device —  
Then learn in man how Sin's accomplished fact  
Is execrable, since no less a price  
Than Christ's death and abasement could suffice  
In expiation, nor the race restore  
That Adam lost when lust did so entice  
That he, for the deep love to Eve he bore,  
From self and from his race God's image madly tore.

But more by Christ's obedience was regained  
Than by transgression lost, and this alone  
Argues, perchance, why sin a place obtained  
In the eternal counsel. If unknown

The mercy ne'er of God could have been shown ;  
His wrath and justice obsolete law had been,  
Unfelt — unfear'd — the moral sense had grown  
Mechanical in creation, save for sin,  
Which evil in itself brought God's perfection in.

So man in Nature lost by Adam's crime,  
In grace by Christ's redemption occupies  
A kingdom and relation more sublime  
To Him who made and saved him, for men rise  
From moral death which holiness defies  
Absolved from sin — delivered from its power,  
So that as freemen now their duty lies,  
Adopted sons of God, and in the hour  
Of Christ's own triumph shall his heirship be their  
dower.

Yet still the world that crucified the Just  
Can see no beauty in him — let it scorn !  
'Tis the old heathen cry of Cain. We trust  
The Blood of Christ to save our souls forlorn.  
We find no goodness in ourselves, but mourn  
Our dark demerits, and we humbly pray  
That he our sinful places may have borne  
Upon the Tree, and so prepared the way  
For us to happiness. 'Tis all our hope and stay.

Shades of departed seers, whose sugared words  
Robbed Death the terrors Life so prophesied,  
We see not how your faith with sight accords,  
But not on Nature's facts your creed relied.  
Ah, monster dread, with Suffering's life-blood  
dyed,  
Ravening in beak, and claw, and hand. We see  
Earthquake and tempest → every power applied  
With nerve and mind's vast capability  
Of torture to make life exquisite tragedy !

Old Sire, thy son of many prayers is dead ?  
Thy daughter, mother ? Would to God she  
were !  
Cypress, O wife, the wreath is thou hast wed,  
Not orange blossoms ! Brother, what of her  
For whom thou hastened o'er sea to confer  
A home ? Alas ! she knows thee not — the strain  
Of expectation was too strong to bear ;  
And so is man driven o'er the world's hard plain  
With scorpion stings of sin, shame, sorrow, madness,  
pain !

However men arraign the ways of God,  
He hath his justification in their heart,  
And few but feel the inward monitor nod  
An acquiescence to each punitive smart.

All feel to some extent their guilty part  
In falling short of their ideal of right,  
The standard to themselves — which with cursed  
art

They break deliberately, and every slight  
Deserves and must entail a chastisement and blight.

Why should the sophist from analogy stray,  
Or dream of an immoral paradise  
Beyond the shores of Death, where far away  
The righteous and the vicious harmonize ;  
Where all shall reap the same reward and joys,  
But pain and merited punishment ne'er dwell ?  
Away ! reflection spurns such specious lies,  
And even against the will doth conscience tell  
That Justice' self must plead for an existing Hell.

Lift up, ye gates, and let the Lord come in !  
The grave was powerless to retain its prey.  
The Substitute who bore his people's sin  
O'ercame the powers of death that holy day,  
And rose the Victor — Sin was purged away !  
Th' incredulous disciples saw their Lord,  
Yet scarce believed their eyes, for even they  
Had so misjudged his own prophetic word  
That when they saw his grave their hopes were there  
interred.

Yet since his death the world has seen him not.  
The last glimpse given of the living Christ  
To loveless eyes was on that awful spot  
Where to their hatred he was sacrificed.  
The Resurrection is a tale devised  
By craft in their esteem. Alas ! alas !  
By nature alien and by Hell enticed,  
How slow of heart man is and ever was  
To believe the message prophets said should come  
to pass !

Nathless as promised in Eternity,  
Some caught aright the truth of the refrain  
A seed have known and served, nor could it be  
The Son of God should come to earth in vain,  
Though seeming failure stalked among his train,  
And Earth at large is scoffing infidel ;  
For God his plan and purpose does maintain,  
And that is right which dreadest seems and fell  
And shaped in harmony with his decree as well.

And yet, O Lord, how long — how long, O Earth,  
Will Virtue be obscured and Vice renowned ?  
Two thousand years have vanished since His  
birth,  
And even now the murderer is crowned

If but his slaughter hath a world-wide bound ;  
The petty thief who kills finds no renown,  
But with his death the scaffold does resound.  
A despot casts a nation's treasury down,  
And madly hastes to war and finds th' imperial  
crown !

Oh not as though thou ne'er hadst been Earth's  
guest !  
Thy teachings like the rain that heaven shares  
With good and bad impartially hath blessed  
Who hate thee most, and even War now wears  
A milder form and wounded enemies spares.  
The shackled slave is free, and woman, of whom  
Lust made a plaything, now new honor bears,  
And risen like her Lord from out the tomb  
Attains new rank in the new sanctity of home !

O Woman, flower of heaven, or fruit of hell !  
Wine of the mercy or the hate of God,  
According as thy soul may rule the spell  
Of Passion or with Lust's or Honor's rod —  
Mother and wife and child — if she hath trod  
In the white sunlight of her chastity,  
A glory and a blessing — by her nod  
Inspiring men to heroic deeds that be  
The boast of Time — the victories of the true and  
free !

But ah, more deadly than the cobra's eye  
Or honey of Trebizond that mads the brain,  
The melting glance, low whisper, amorous sigh,  
And the warm breasts' voluptuous refrain —  
The moist hand's pressure soft as flowers in rain,  
The scarce conceal'd leg, the twinkling foot!  
What gift from men could not fair Helen obtain?  
Who with th' Egyptian Syren could dispute  
Or to ripe Beauty's lips deny her pleading suit?

With supercilious scorn the nations heard  
Christ's doctrine of the brotherhood of man.  
What! shall the Jew believe the humbling word,  
Or Roman clasp the wild barbarian  
And fraternize with the uncultured clan  
In German swamps or woad-hued Britain's tents?  
Yea — now where Earth's great empires lead the  
van  
Of progress, there this truth divine presents,  
And hospitals, and alms, and healing arts from  
thence.

That hybrid marriage even of Church and State,  
The wedded powers of alien hopes and ways,  
Like iron and clay the prophet could not mate,  
Still blessed the Earth with peace and better  
days.

Even that communion in the skeptic's phrase,  
Nor slanderous all "whose annals are of hell,"  
Hath been a sanctuary worthy praise  
And a restraint for ages wild and fell  
Whom undefiled religion could not curb as well!

And more — yea, sculpture, poetry, and art,  
Found a new birth in themes far more divine,  
Such new creations by the saintly heart  
That nations marvel and have made a shrine  
Of reverent worship for Art's new design —  
No more the Wanton of unchaste desire,  
But the handmaid of holiness benign,  
Angelo, Raphael, Dante's seraph fire  
And the immortal strains of Milton's heavenly lyre

There are who make it a reproach of Christ  
That Art is slighted where he reigns supreme,  
And that the genius of his creed sufficed  
For the spoliation of the works we deem  
The gems of Time, by which in their esteem  
The treasures of the ages found no ruth,  
The poet's rapture and the artist's dream,  
And though in hate they speak and strive the  
Truth  
To smite a mortal blow — 't is with somewhat of  
sooth;



For these are trivial things in Jesu's eyes  
 Compared with human souls and sin and hell,  
 To please the lusting heart with new surprise  
 And in soft Luxury's enervating spell  
 To bid the poor worm-destined Body dwell,  
 While the eternal soul that lives within  
 Is left unto its fate immedicable.  
 Dread Fate! when lost to hope, and love, and  
     kin,  
 From earthly mansions reft to the dread doom of  
     Sin !

Statues, paintings, words,— the loveliest thought  
 Of the intoxicated heart and sick  
 With longings after beauty that hath sought  
 In various ways to perpetuate its quick  
 Appreciation — but 't is Culture's trick  
 To feed th' artistic instinct and nice sense  
 With form and color, grace and rhetoric,  
 But leave the moral perceptive faculties dense,  
 And cloud the spiritual eye, and blunt the highest  
     sense !

Alas, the beauty of the flesh is lust  
 Too often ! — even the melody of sound,  
 The harmony of sculptured limb and bust,  
 The lyrics with the immortal laurel bound,

May be as poison-flowers whose roots are found  
Feeding upon corruption, and in sooth  
Corrupting holiness and interwound  
With deadly injury to ingenuous youth,  
To woman's purity, to virtue and to truth.

Undoubtedly we may and must allow  
That Christ — to those who live aright his creed —  
Hath clipped the wing of Art and made her bow  
To Truth, in whose pure atmosphere indeed  
Lawless Imagination cannot breed,  
And though resplendent more those wings may  
    seem  
With which the sensualist the hours may speed,  
They fail when Death wakes the delirious dream,  
As Icarus' pinions fell in the sun's fervid beam.

Even as no one may with truth gainsay  
But Christ hath weakened love of human hearts  
Of man and woman, and of kindship's sway,  
And Nature's fearless, deepest charm departs,  
It is with power of these even as with Art's  
That God assumes the first place in the soul,  
And these inferiorly, — yea, the darts  
Of love in woman lose their fierce control,  
Else whom she loves is God and Heaven and Life's  
    one goal !

And patriotism dies, and all earth's claim  
To those who in His kingdom truly born  
Live the reality and not mere name,  
For have they not put Heaven's livery on ?  
All brethren — waiting for Christ's coming dawn ?  
Is not the world and even their own flesh in  
The evil one, and at the judgment morn  
Will not its powers and glories 'mid the din  
Of crashing spheres, all share the awful curse of  
Sin ?

Lord Christ ! to see those who have bent the knee  
And made obeisance in the mystic wave,  
To watch them fight in earthly rivalry  
Who thus have known thy love and power to  
save,—  
What shall we call such — idiot or knave ?  
Yet at the bidding of some worldly power  
Christians have sent their brethren to the grave,  
Shedding their blood in the ensanguined shower  
Of massacre, as hate or conquest rules the hour !

If all the blood by rival Christians shed,  
If all the deeds most damnable and foul  
In their design by Christ's professors led  
Committed, sanctioned by the church and cowl,

Were not concealed by Time, the heavens would  
scowl  
And Nature's hues be all incarnadined.  
Yea, how the mocking fiends of hell must howl  
In devilish glee when they behold mankind,  
And by Christ's name see every vice or masked or  
shrined !

Ah, broad the line of demarcation lies  
Between the heavenly and terrestrial sphere,  
Christ and the World — nor can they harmonize,  
And false to both who seeks to find or rear  
A neutral kingdom or to bring them near  
And bridge by compromise or sophistry  
Th' antagonism — one his bark must steer  
With no uncertain course, but choose to be  
Despised of God or Mammon through all eternity.

'T is this that makes so pitifully sad  
The lives of the reformers of the world ;  
Earth's generous souls who have or who have had  
The hope to their unselfish eyes unfurled  
By ethics to dethrone the vices curled  
'Round man's infatuate heart, but all in vain  
Their misdirected prayers and tears impearled  
In sympathizing eyes — at least their pain  
Brought not the Golden Age they suffered to obtain.

For they are seeking to restore to Earth  
The long-lost Eden, but by hopeless means  
Building their homes upon a godless hearth,  
As he who dared rebuild the ominous scenes  
Of Jericho, despite the curse that leans  
Upon its gates; but nothing evermore  
Upon Earth's basis, man's fallen spirit weans  
From selfishness and lust, or can restore  
Unto the soul the pristine whiteness which it bore.

Until this is accomplished Art is vain,  
And Learning too, and Culture but a snare,  
As these in earthly Courts less favor gain  
Than ignorant criminals, for such gifts prepare  
The soul estranged nor dangerous menace to bear  
Unto the law abiding — so, ah me!  
That human wolves should wish Thy power to tear  
From this thy world may not a marvel be;  
But, O Lord God, that Shelley's soul should rail at  
thee!

O dreamers in Utopia! Minds astray  
With the more awful madness of the soul,  
Who have as 't were sought to release the prey  
Of Sin from Heaven's omnipotent control,

By Nature still our feelings toward thee roll,  
For God's ways to our fleshly hearts seem hard,  
And his hand heavy, and th' eternal goal  
Of Sin — but it is perilous to regard  
The evil thoughts within that madden and retard.

And after all we are driven to this choice:  
Christ, or — whom will ye choose instead of  
him?  
From out the boding darkness, face or voice,  
Whose is there makes the terror seem less grim  
Or by whose guidance man his sails may trim  
And find safe haven past the Deeps of Death?  
Who born of woman but whose life fades dim  
Beside his, or is not as though we saith  
“ Barabbas,” as of old the wild mob's lawless breath?

The Saviour gave the individual place;  
Till him mankind were great as nations or  
As governments free, or as a separate race,  
But not as separate persons, as in war  
Even now a thousand fall and Fame's hurrah  
Is not for them but for the one who led  
And rose to prominence in the brunt they bore;  
But Christ razed level slave and kingly head,  
And one by one before the Throne all Earth must  
tread.

There is a bastard science in our day  
Whose vain apostles vaunt their unbelief,  
Forgetful that of myriads who obey  
The Cross upon its annals are the chief  
Of Science and Philosophy — in brief,  
Augustine, Bacon, Newton, Locke, — each name  
Should bring these pseudo-scientists to grief,  
Pigmies that strive with stumbling steps and lame  
To follow in the strides by which the giants came.

Heavens ! what hypotheses drag out their day  
Like Jonah's gourd — the marvel of a night,  
Believed by petty dupes who worship pay  
To every spirit save the God of light.  
All lies are true, however great or slight,  
To bolster Infidelity, or show  
One of her thousand theories in the right,  
Though mutually destructive — if but so  
The creed of Christ should (as they hope) receive  
a blow.

Like Babel's tower behold their building rise —  
These Architects of Laputa — up they reach,  
And deem ere long t' assault the defenseless  
skies —  
When lo ! Heaven's scorn is visited on each,

The drunkard's jargon — incoherent speech.  
Ah, blatant sophists ! does Christ's power decay ?  
Nay, rather grows colossal though ye teach  
What venom the line of scoffing hosts display,  
From Celsus to Don Quixote Huxley of our day !

O marvelous Book — the Oracles of God !  
Thy foes have crept forth from the ooze and  
    slime  
Of haughty hearts and straying feet that trod  
The paths of lechery or of sin or crime.  
O Light to Nature, and the torch to Time,  
The test of Science and the Treasury  
Of poets and the mold of the sublime !  
The Statesman's statute and the Orator's plea ;  
Man were a dread enigma were it not for thee.

We see thee yet, fair Star of Bethlehem ;  
It points the sinner still, O Christ, to thee !  
O luminous above each twinkling gem  
That shines like gold-dust in Night's galaxy !  
Old creeds are dead, and now no votary  
To void Olympus sends imploring breath.  
Black Afric, cursed by Nature's stern decree,  
In Christ becomes transformed from creeds of  
    Death ;  
The Brahmin and the Boodh take refuge in the  
    Faith.



But more than these are promised Lord, to thee ;  
The travail of thy soul hath purchased more,  
And knowledge as the waters flood the sea  
Shall spread and make thee Lord of every shore.  
Where one hath come a thousand shall implore  
Thy favor, till Sin doth no more inspire,  
And that day of predestined time restore  
Thine ancient people, who with psalm and lyre  
From every land will haste to crown the true  
Messiah.

Meanwhile the land her lonely Sabbaths keeps,  
Pillaged by fierce marauders and betrayed  
By false Christs till the slain and ghastly heaps  
Without her walls a sickening festival made  
For jackals and the wild beasts, while arrayed  
In sackcloth those within fought with despair  
And famine — and like Thyestis' banquet laid —  
But faint at heart the shuddering Nine forbear  
To chronicle th' unnatural deeds the scribes declare

Mad sires and women cast in delicate mold  
Committed, but the heaven above was brass  
To prayer and sacrifice, and as foretold  
By their Law-giver, never nation was

Before or since brought to such awful pass ;  
But turn from it, my soul — yet even to-day  
Th' Almighty's dreadful scourges still harass ;  
From clime to clime they flee, forever prey  
To rapine and to greed — lone exiles on life's way !

But not beyond reversal is their doom.  
Redemption comes ; till then, O faithful land,  
In vain the stranger seeks to make thee bloom,  
But thorns and briars spring beneath his hand  
Luxuriantly, while cursed by Famine's wand  
Sour, shriveled fruitage and aborted flowers  
That fail of harvest — all he can command.  
The forts and towns are dens — the wild ass  
                    cowers  
Beneath some ruined arch left of palatial towers.

O land of Love and Death ! in happier times  
Not thus the hours of day and evening meet,  
But when the moon the arch of heaven upclimbs  
The voice of heart and tabret cheer the street,  
And boys and girls at play. The air is sweet  
With odors of the vintage — blossoming trees  
And falling waters charm eye, ear, and greet  
The lulled sense with delicious thrills of ease —  
The pastoral joys of those who love delights like  
                    these.

Olives, almonds, figs, the clusters of the vine,  
Night-blooming flowers, and, fairer than these all,  
The blushing maid whose starry eyes ashine  
Are brighter than the sparkling dews that fall  
Moonlit on purple grapes. The weary thrall  
Of desolate years have exiled even love,  
But once responsive to the turtle's call,  
What tales were told to hearts that feared to move  
For very joy, in every haunted mystic grove !

These yet, will Zion's be, and she who now  
Is scorned of all the nations, in that day  
Will wear a crown on her anointed brow  
And rule the earth with the supremest sway.  
The Star of Jacob will revive his ray  
And Israel and Judah bend the knee  
Restored, and to the Root of Jesse pray.  
Even from afar — the islands of the sea —  
To Shiloh will the gathering of the people be.

But we, O God, grant us the second birth !  
Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.  
Like Noah's dove, we wander o'er the Earth,  
Seeking, but find no sanctuary to flee  
Until we reach the road to Calvary.  
Lift, God of Peace, on us thy countenance  
That we the footsteps of thy saints may see.  
Lead us to Jesus — lead us by thy glance,  
And from our eyes unveil the scales of ignorance.

By thy Son's birth, from Mary's sacred womb ;  
By the pure life thy righteous Servant led ;  
By Christ's Temptation in the desert's gloom ;  
By his Transfiguration — by the dread  
Gethsemane with awful agony red,  
By his thorn-crown, and cross, and by his grave,  
And by his Resurrection from the dead,  
And his Ascension, we lost sinners crave  
His Intercession now our souls from Hell to save.

So shall we taste the everlasting joys  
At thy right hand when heart and flesh shall fail,  
When Earth is sinewless, and Nature cloys.  
O Bride of Christ ! no sins can e'er assail  
The Blood-washed who have found the Holy  
Grail.  
But God will wipe their tears and they will see  
The New Jerusalem within the veil,  
And the new Heaven and Earth where Christ  
will be  
The glorious Light and Temple of Eternity !  
1888.

## EPILOGUE.

*Forgive the error and the sin  
Commingled in these feverish lines.  
Forgive the unpruned thoughts herein  
That fail to reach Thy high designs.*

*Forgive the blindness of the mind,  
The hardened heart, the shortened sight,  
That failed to feel Thee ever kind,  
That questioned if Thy way was right.*

*Forgive that I, instead of psalm  
Of worship, gratitude, and laud —  
That I who dust and ashes am  
Should argue of the ways of God.*

*Forgive the rash irreverence,  
If there be such in word or thought,  
As though I knew the Why or Whence,  
As though Thou needest to be taught.*

*Forgive that in my ignorance  
I reason rather than obey,  
That at the end I cast a glance  
Before my feet pursue Thy way.*

*But be this moral to my song :*

*I hold by faith, though not by sight,  
That man must ever be the wrong,  
And God must ever be the right —*

*Right when he smites the hardest blow,  
Right when he veils himself in Night,  
Right when our tears of sorrow flow  
And vainly still we peer for light.*

*I know not the result of things,  
But still will hope in all distress  
That out of human failure springs  
The harvest of divine success;*

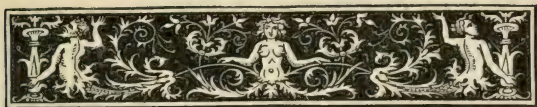
*That no malignant lust to curse,  
That not a pang of needless pain,  
Obtains in God's vast universe,  
But all works some eternal gain.*

JANUARY 26, 1890.

MISCELLANEOUS VERSES.







## A Modern Ulysses.

1861—1865.

### I.

IN creamy lawn and laces rare  
And ripe red roses on her breast,  
And jewels flashing in her hair,  
Her charms must not be sung but guessed.  
The marble fountain mirrors bright  
Her image in its beaded spray,  
No marvel in her lover's sight  
She seems a Naiad come that way.

The thievish breezes faintly stir  
The pillaged blossoms at her feet,  
Her faithful lover sees but her  
Compared with whom no flower is sweet ;  
For as her heart-throbs go and come  
An atmosphere around her flows  
Like the soft air that trembles from  
The shredded petals of a rose.

Her eyes pursue with languorous ease  
The limpid water's airy flight,  
Or turn to vines trailed from the trees  
With pendant bloom or berries white.  
And then in ivory-lidded tombs  
She veils them in a transient dream,  
And while her thoughts find voice resumes  
The lately interrupted theme:

“I love you — yes — but there has grown  
Within my soul a formless fear  
That startles like a prophet's tone  
My doubting spirit's inner ear;  
And I have questioned of my heart,  
‘Is this the man thou dost elect  
Through life to sway thy better part  
And thy obedience and respect?’

“And ever — Oh, forgive the word! —  
The answer, ‘No,’ tolls in my heart,  
But better that its voice be heard,  
Even if the truth should bid us part;  
For though since Childhood's earliest years  
You've been my hero ne'er estranged,  
Yet different now the world appears,  
And you or I, or both, are changed.

“ Although in truth you have as yet  
 The same clear cheeks and eyes of fire,  
 The courted leader of your set,  
 The model of correct attire ;  
 Though still the foremost as of yore  
 In games and sports, at chase and ball —  
 But, oh, the woman soul craves more  
 Before it can surrender all.

“ You have not lived — the silken cords  
 Of sloth have bound you unto ease.  
 O master of smooth flattery’s words,  
 How trivial judged by deeds are these !  
 Though rank and wealth men hold as worth,  
 If he has toiled to bless his race  
 A base-born cripple bent to earth  
 In Heaven stands in higher place.”

As one whose hopes are in eclipse,  
 As one who bows to doubt and fate,  
 Her hands he lifted to his lips  
 And brought her to her father’s gate ;  
 Then bowing with a courtly grace,  
 He said, “ The vapid Past forgive.  
 When next we stand thus face to face,  
 I shall have some excuse to live.”

## II.

He was an orphan dowered with all  
That wealth could buy or caste desire,  
But now upon his spirit pall  
The joys he dreamed would never tire —  
The dogs that barked him welcome home,  
The steeds that neighed congratulate,  
The fancy fowl, the pigeoned dome,—  
From all he turned him satiate.

And in his mansion with its walls  
With pictures decked in golden frames,  
And faint perfume blown through the halls,  
The smoking den and clouded games,  
Through every fair luxurious room,  
Unexorcised by morning bright,  
There seemed a specter and a tomb ;  
It was the ghost of past delight.

Old founts of joy and wisdom's spring,  
The books he loved had lost their sway,  
But music soothed the Hebrew king  
And drove his malady away.  
With trembling hands he touched a chord,  
And tried — but vainly tried — to play,  
For lo ! his soul rose at a word,  
“ Life is no more a holiday.”

He glanced at his small, useless hands,  
 The white, smooth palms of idleness.  
 "The coarsest laborer's on my lands,"  
 He muttered, "I would change with his."  
 His nobler self as from a trance  
 Awoke and mused in reverie:  
 "To every noble thought of man's  
 God gives an opportunity."

The morning paper caught his eye —  
 "My country calls to arms," he thought;  
 "If I should in her service die —  
 I, who ne'er deed of labor wrought,  
 I, who have only pleased my will  
 Nor cared to sooth another's pain,  
 My heart were proved not wholly ill,  
 My life were surely not in vain.

"And if some hand with honest tears  
 Should write — a comrade it might chance —  
 'This man for five and twenty years  
 Fared softly in sweet dalliance,  
 And then like a new Prodigal he  
 Flung his soft robes of slavery down  
 And died that others might be free,'—  
 This surely were a victor's crown."

## III.

He proved he loved his country well,  
Through years of vengeful shell and shot ;  
And when the tides of battle fell  
His presence cheered each sufferer's cot.  
Thus heart and mind in larger spheres  
And sweet activities did move,  
Till Peace kissed dry his country's tears  
And he returned unto his love.

Still young and fair with gem-starred hair,  
And clinging lace around her thrown,  
She met him with a gracious air  
And in her boudoir and alone.  
Her eyes still rivaled envious stars,  
Her laugh still silvery melody,—  
But as a single false note jars  
The soul attuned to harmony,

So something — perhaps the curl of jet  
Toyed with to lure his word of praise,  
Or perhaps the smile — O fair coquette !  
An instant that the glass betrays  
Whate'er it may have been to dim  
The sweet accord of soul and face,  
He saw she had not grown with him,  
Nor soared above the commonplace.

She read his thought intuitively,  
 And watched his ideal droop and die  
 Before the vain reality,  
 And laughed and chatted like a pie,—  
 Yet hated him who dared to see  
 In her fine gold the least alloy,  
 And stabbed his love —“ Pray stay to tea,  
 And see my husband and our boy.”

DECEMBER, 1887.

## The Lady in White.

ARRAYED in white she is more fair  
Than queens in state and jewels rare,

Who frustrate Beauty's high intent  
With meretricious ornament.

She needs no aid from Art or Dress  
To magnify her loveliness,

But like a violet by a stone  
Her beauty is herself alone.

Her form perfection and her face,  
Her carriage stateliness and grace.

The Host redeemed in garments white  
Are beautiful in Heaven's sight.

Their garb is but the simile  
Of inward grace and purity.

So clad in white it represents  
Her true self's snow-like innocence.



Her white soul ne'er by passion tossed  
Or wrong desire or hatred crossed.

Her truthful mind without a spot  
Where evil thought adventures not.

Her patient heart, her spirit pure,  
Her temper peaceful and demure.

Arrayed in white she is more fair  
Than queens in stately pageants are.

DECEMBER, 1887.

## To a Lady.

IF by incredible decree

    This Earth revolved through endless night,  
The darkness could not rob from thee

    The homage that is beauty's right,  
For men would hear and hearing be  
    As charmed by ear as now by sight.

For that immaculate soul of thine

    (A diamond in a pearl-set case);

Thy radiant thoughts in words as fine

    (The index of thy spirit's grace),

Confess a beauty as divine

    As faultless form and perfect face.

Thy voice — the nightingale's complaint

    Is not more sweet, more rich, more clear,

When thou dost sing of love or paint

    In flowers of song his hope or fear,

And thy chaste hymns, melodious saint,

    Like seraph's tune enchant the ear.

Should I compare thee to the sun?  
 Night, cloudy night obscures his ray;  
 The stars their wondrous courses run,  
 But lose their luster during day,  
 And birds of Paradise are dun  
 When Eve's white star shines o'er the spray.

Love's amorous bards applauding sing  
 The flowers that scarce outlinger May;  
 Thou wear'st them yet I will not string  
 My harp to blossoms frail as they,  
 When thou dost such an opulence bring  
 Of loveliness beyond decay.

DECEMBER, 1887.

## Destiny.

BLUE are her eyes as the gem turquoise,  
The flowers in her cheeks are peonies rare,  
And the sun-bright halo that circles the saints  
Her burnished fillet of close-coiled hair.

Love sees no sun that outshines those eyes,  
But beneath ivory lids they eclipse at praise,  
For she walks love-proof like the huntress queen  
And snowy-souled in her virginal grace.

Love on her lips spies a rare delight,  
Love on her cheeks a perpetual feast,  
Love is enmeshed in her fragrant hair  
As a moth in amber is ne'er released.

As a bee finds the nectar stored for him  
But stings the rude touch that would rifle the  
bower,  
The elect knight-errant will win the prize  
Borne on the car of th' auspicious hour.

While fully conscious that ne'er for me  
The charm of her eye or her treasure of heart,  
Still must I love her and worship afar,  
Seeing Love's blessings but bearing his smart.

DECEMBER, 1887.

## The Test.

TWO angels couched beneath th' ambrosial trees  
Of Heaven debated this deep question o'er —  
Whether a daughter of the Earth e'er bore  
An offspring who denied God's being. These  
Argued as long as sprung from eastern seas  
The unleashed sun would touch the western  
shore,  
A day earth measure — and more dark the more  
The point was mooted grew its mysteries.  
Through seraphim, God's tireless melodists,  
Cherub and archangelic host it ran ;  
Until a voice ineffable light amid  
Replied : " Descend among the sciolists,  
And play queen, bishop, castle, king, knight,  
man —  
The pieces in full sight, the players hid."

Launched earthward where the star-clubbed  
hunter stands,  
They heard where Science held a tournament,  
Supposed denied or taught inconsequent  
Creative Mind — then without causative hands  
As men saw, chess and board a space demands

Of their own impulse move, take check and end 't  
In mated king. At this one angel bent  
To test how far Earth's casuistry expands,  
Clouded his glory, crying (fleshed as man),  
    "Knights may not chess move of their own  
        intention,  
If matter can this orderly world devise?"  
But they — "There is no God, blind fool, but can  
    These ivory bits play without man's invention?"  
So sadly the late disputants sought their skies.

DECEMBER, 1887.

## A Village Maiden.

SHE is a simple village maid  
In printed calico arrayed,  
In cotton stockings, misshaped shoes,  
Which dainty ladies never use.  
Coiled in a simple braid her hair,  
A common flower perhaps prisoned there;  
But never gems of art or mine  
Within its chestnut tresses shine,  
And never on her fingers blaze  
The diamond's sun or emerald's rays,  
Or rubies sunk in golden bars  
Like some imprisoned fire from Mars;  
But in their stead, poor piteous thing,  
Her mother's mended wedding-ring.  
Ah, lady of the haughty stare,  
You would not waste a thought on her,  
No more than cast a second look  
    Upon the dandelion root  
That for a pebble you mistook  
    And pressed to death beneath your foot,  
Or did you crush it purposely  
Because it did not please your eye?

She has some claim to Beauty's dower,  
The beauty of a slighted flower  
That sprung in every woodland lair,  
The fields and by-paths everywhere,  
The rustic churls pass blindly by —  
Oh then, what simile will apply,  
Since violet flowers and sapphire skies  
Are sworn to high-born beauty's eyes,  
And lilies pale and roses red  
To wealthy ladies' cheeks are wed?  
Could I some common flower discover,  
Unsung by bard, unplucked by lover,  
Then I could sing her eyes' deep blue,  
The blush white on her soft cheeks too,  
The crimson on her lips, and 'neath  
Their petals the bright shining teeth.

No title-deeds to wealth she owns,  
Nor bonds, nor lands, nor precious stones, —  
And yet, ah me ! the care and fret  
Which vast possessions e'er beget,  
The thorn-crowned day's anxieties,  
The nights that frightened slumber flees,  
Though wooed in rooms of gilded ease,  
And down and silken canopies ;  
While she — her days in drudgery spent  
Hears in her heart the bird Content,  
And o'er her in night's dreamless hours  
Sleep sinks like drowsy moths in flowers.



Ah, which is rich and which is poor?  
 I hold this truth is fixed and sure :  
 God's compensation never fails ;  
 He balances in golden scales  
 The gifts of rank and circumstance,  
 And never by fortuitous chance.  
 It haps that on the breast of care  
 Are pearls and diamonds warmed and fair,  
 While the light heart of happiness  
 Beats gratefully in gingham dress.  
 Yea, she has riches in her health,  
 Her very toil she feels is wealth —  
 To wash a plate for one she loves,  
 To feed her chickens and her doves,  
 To steal at times a restful hour  
 And watch her roses burst in flower.  
 At church she sits among the choir  
 And sings with a seraphic fire,  
 And hears the minister relate  
     How through his dear Son sacrificed  
 The love of God makes rich and great  
     Men — worms of earth but heirs through  
         Christ.  
 For her the new Jerusalem  
 Has streets of gold and gates of gem,  
 For her Life's stream in crystal flows,  
 For her the tree of amaranth grows,  
 And she, though poor by earth's degree,  
 God's child — thy heir, Eternity.

O child of fashion, as you stand  
Upon the moonlit sea's gray sand,  
So languid — weary of the day's  
Vast opulence of idle praise,  
If some bright angel wandered here  
A season from his proper sphere,  
Which would he hold in nobler view —  
The guileless village maid or you ?

She ne'er has felt the fever heat  
Of fame thrill in her pulses' beat,  
And yet she tastes a local fame —  
The whole round village knows her name.  
And tell me what the difference is  
Between the hero's fame and this?  
Save that through longer arcs of time,  
    More wide circumferences of space,  
The spreading circles of sublime,  
    Immortal thoughts and deeds we trace ;  
Yet millions plod upon the earth  
Who never heard of Shakspeare's birth,  
And empires vast even as his own  
Ne'er knew of Cæsar or his throne.  
O echo of a voice that was,  
    O shadow with the substance fled,  
A footprint in the withered grass  
    When he who pressed it there is dead.  
But her aim for the present here  
Is God to serve within her sphere

And leave the afterward with God,  
 And to her Saviour all the praise —  
 A true philosophy more broad  
 Than anxious search for earth-born bays.  
 What boots it to the heedless corse  
 Fame's plauding million throats and hoarse,  
 When from the precincts of the tomb  
 He cannot hear and could not come?

She is a simple village maid,  
 Whose timid foot hath never strayed  
 A dozen leagues beyond her home.  
 No daisies plucked from Keats's grave  
 Are souvenirs of days in Rome,  
 Nor primroses that seem to hold  
 A mirror to the moon's pale gold.

Nor heather that did sweetly wave  
 Upon the Scottish hills betray  
 How far her feet have sped away.  
 Poor child! — her innocence doth rate  
 Her brother as a traveler great  
 Since he beheld a neighboring State.  
 She knows but little of the schools,  
 Of Euclid's problems, Murray's rules;  
 She never heard of Tasso's verse,  
 Of Petrarch's Laura, or her name  
 Whose loveliness gave Dante fame —  
 The immortal triad unto whom  
 It was their strange melodious doom  
 That love should blessing be and curse.

She knew as little, I dare say,  
As girls at Newport or Cape May  
Of Elzevirs and Aldi books  
And knowledge hid in musty nooks.  
Yet still across her mind, I say  
Bright golden fancies had their sway.  
The clouds across a summer sky  
Were not clouds always to her eye;  
The flowers and grass on which she stood  
Held teachings in them hidden by God,  
In whom — as ignorant as a bird  
Of brilliant souls that grandly erred,  
She held — her hope in life and death —  
A present and undoubting faith.

\* \* \* \* \*

DECEMBER 31, 1887.

## A Coquette.

THE oft-told tale of women fair, men fools;  
Strength leaves the strong and wisdom flees the  
wise,  
Ambition youth, from age his homilies  
(Frost in the hair ne'er heart of ardor cools),  
And sweet Philosophy in vain holds schools  
Before the smiles of those unchanging eyes.  
Thou who despisest conquered lovers' sighs,  
Thou who more harshly than a despot rules,  
Since Adam dared his God for love of Eve,  
Men's fame, kings' crowns, the very flowers of  
hell  
Thy lovers have dared pluck thee and dare  
still —  
And thou — what guerdon dost thou give or  
leave?  
Ah, let Scotch Mary's white-haired jailer tell,  
Or happier he asleep on Latmos' hill.

JANUARY 15, 1888.

## Love and Death.

THE blown sea breaking o'er a wall of rocks  
Hollows a shell-shaped bed for quiet waters  
And spent waves driven shoreward. Here we found  
her

With tangled seaweed laced around her form  
Like strips of dark green satin, eyelids sealed  
As if some pitying sea nymph kissed them shut,  
And life's last legacy to death — a smile —  
Upon her lips, and death's dread mask itself  
So fair a counterfeit of blushful life  
That you might fancy her a naiad sleeping  
Or syren tired of song. Her hands down-dropped  
Jeweled and clutched in one a broken flower,  
And in her white-orbed bosom hid a letter  
Written in beautiful cursive script that read :

“ In love a woman's heart and life are one,  
Or rather woman's love lays hold on death  
As her protector when despised and spurned,  
The sole resource of honor and despair.  
Therefore as you have ranked my love a weed,

I die — and seek from God but one revenge,  
 That I who was not beautiful in life  
 In your eyes may be beautiful in death ;  
 And as you gaze upon me in my shroud  
 Ask yourself: ‘ What immedicable wound  
 Did she inflict that called for this revenge ? ’  
 You say I trod men’s hearts — have any suffered  
 As you have made me suffer ? I was young  
 And beautiful, they said, and youth and beauty  
 Love adulation, but I craved not yours.  
 I spun no fatal web to catch your soul  
 As you sought mine, and when with cunning skill  
 You asked for love I gave you my whole heart,—  
 And you — you crushed it with contempt and scorn.  
 Therefore let all men judge who was more cruel,  
 I who gave love to you that was my life,  
 Or you who gave me hatred unto death.”

Her prayer was heard — in death too as in life  
 She was the model and the type of beauty  
 That Art might copy and become immortal ;  
 But I would rather picture her in life,  
 Fair Proserpine ere she became the bride  
 Of coal-black Dis. Oh, she was queen of life !  
 The languorous breath that shreds the lily buds  
 Into full blossom seemed to pulse around her.  
 Even on the night that had such tragic morn  
 My friend had given a ball where she had been  
 Th’ admired of all eyes, praised of every tongue ;

Addressed with compliments that spoken to others  
Were coarse hyperbole, but were to her  
As natural and right  
As self-prostration where a god has stepped.  
Alas ! what change six fleet-winged hours begot :  
One moment as the moon climbed to her noon  
Bepraised, and then as noiselessly stole off  
As if an angel hidden in her flesh  
Had borne her off to heaven. Through the fields  
Twinkling with the dew and sweet with earth's  
loosed odors,  
The ghostly patch of woods star-lit and cold  
We searched and called aloud, and Echo mocked,  
Till as gray dawn crept shivering o'er the sky  
We found her here.

The letter was addressed  
Unto our host, who read it silently,  
His face an ashen white of sudden pain.  
But as we bore her tenderly to the house  
He spoke. "After the funeral," said he hoarsely —  
"After the funeral — come — I will explain."  
And thus within a week we walked these fields  
Unto this fatal lake, and sitting here  
Upon the verdurous bank beneath this tree,  
He told his tale — the murmur of the waves,  
A sea-bird's cry, a loosened acorn dropping,  
The only sound that voice or echo found  
To tell of other life.



And thus my friend :

“ The name of Edgar Clive is strange to you,  
But is to me familiar as my heart-throb.  
I met him first in Florence six years ago,  
Rich in his love of art and poor in purse,  
But in his heart and character a treasure  
Vaster than unmined mountains veined with gold.  
And I accounted his deep love for me  
More precious than my fortune. Day by day  
Our streams of separate life commingled more,  
Till like the ancient Christians neither held  
An individual property, but shared  
In common till this woman crossed our path.  
Oh, she was fair beyond all rivaling,  
To whom all spoke words should be poetry ;  
All flowers of language, all immortal thoughts,  
That shine through our poor tongue as the white  
stars

Gleam through the clouds, too coarse exteriors  
For such bright souls, became her well as gems  
Her glossy hair or roses on her bosom.  
No wonder Edgar loved her — madly loved her ;  
But she — it was her sport — her heart despised  
The very opulence of adulation,  
Her polished selfishness sphered round her soul  
That it appeared a virtue. So I swore  
That I would save my friend from this Delilah.  
But he was Samson shorn before I knew it,  
And not alone his love for me grew cold,

But Art no longer held a shrine for him.  
He fled his atelier for gaming-tables  
To win her presents, and at last became  
Bankrupt ; and then she smote his love with smiles  
Or archéd eyes that heard incredulous tales :  
' Really she had not dreamed — she had not thought  
That his intentions were so serious.  
Sorry — she liked him as a friend so much.'  
So I, the wealthy American, brought her tribute,  
The gold of lavish gifts, the myrrh of pleasure,  
The frankincense of flattery — and ere long  
She loved me deeply as my friend loved her.  
Oh, then it dawned upon me I was base !  
And then I sought t' undo my work, and could not ;  
And then I sought to love her too, but could not, —  
For love comes not by force or prayer, — and thus  
Were all things no whit better, but much worse.  
My friend scorned more than ever, and to me  
Awarding all the blame and loathing me ;  
And she, to me who brought the vulture Hate  
Sending the sweet dove Love. I felt accursed,  
Ashamed of day's white light, for so revenge  
Like to the tortured scorpion stings itself —  
Yet who could dream such love in a coquette !"

" Twice perjured !" shrieked a voice behind the  
tree ;

" False to her memory who died for you !  
False to the friendship you professed for me ;

There is not air enough 'neath liberal heaven  
 For you and me to breathe and live an hour."  
 And turning, startled by this fierce tirade  
 That brawled like a wild stream down banks precip-  
         itous,

I saw a man with features passion stirred,  
 Brandishing in his hand a long, keen knife.  
 'T was Edgar Clive — my friend knew well the voice,  
 And I intuitively guessed its name,  
 And we both knew it gushed from lips of madness,  
 As the deed proved ; for hardly had we risen  
 Than with a shriek ear-splitting, which the woods  
 Re-echoed back, he rushed upon us both —  
 But stumbled, being blinded by his passion,  
 Tripped o'er a broken branch, and headlong fell,  
 Sheathing the glittering weapon in his breast.  
 So perished Clive within a swallow-flight  
 Of where the lady that he loved had ebb'd  
 Her hapless life away upon the tide.

And this is why this house is tenantless,  
 And these rich arable acres lie untill'd,  
 Left fallow to the despotism of weeds,  
 Luxuriant thistles, waist-high golden-rod,  
 Rank grass, and here and there, chance sown by  
         wind

Or dropped by vagrant bird, a garden seed  
 Taken root has bloomed 'mid alien environment.  
 And by the lake the sea-bird builds her nest

All undisturbed along the sedgy marge,—  
While he who owns them, exiled from his country,  
Perchance now hears from far-off minarets  
The muezzin's sonorous call or on strange hills,  
While Eve's first star shines paly from on high,  
Lists to the bulbul sing his passionate plaint,  
At which the roses rend their virginal buds  
And breathe rich fragrant sighs.

JANUARY, 1888.

## Sonnet.

SHE placed the flower he loved in her fair hair,  
And whispered, " Heart, he will be here to-night  
Of whom long years these eyes have mourned for  
sight ";  
And stood his picture by her sewing chair  
To make expectancy less hard to bear,—  
And so sat waiting — dreaming how time's flight  
Had made his mind and soul more broad and  
bright,  
Making perfection what was ever fair.  
And when he came — O God ! that he had died  
With his first word of welcome, so that she  
Had never known his spirit commonplace.  
How oft has love thus falsely prophesied,  
Th' ideal smote dead by the reality  
As men were slain by the dread Gorgon face !

JANUARY 22, 1888.

















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